

RESOLUTION NO. 1544

Adopting the Scenic Highways Element as an addition to the Visalia General Plan.

WHEREAS the Visalia City Planning Commission recommended adoption of the Scenic Highways Element on January 26, 1976, and

WHEREAS, the California Advisory Committee on Scenic Highways designated Highway 198 (from U.S. 99 to the Sequoia National Park boundary) as eligible for scenic highway status, and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that the scenic quality along Highway 198 is a precious community resource, and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that it is in the best interest of the general welfare of the community to develop procedures which will protect and foster the unique scenic qualities of Highway 198;

Now therefore BE IT RESOLVED as follows:

- (1) The Visalia City Council adopt the data, text, maps and policies in the "Scenic Highways Element". attached to this resolution.
- (2) The Visalia City Council does hereby add the "Scenic Highway Element" to the Visalia General Plan.

Passed and adopted this 17th day of February, 1976.

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ATTEST: DONNA HALL, CITY CLERK

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

I, Donna Hall, City Clerk of the City of Visalia, certify the foregoing is a full and true copy of Resolution 1544 passed and adopted by the Council of the City of Visalia at a regular meeting thereof held on the 17th day of February, 1976.

Donna Hall

Dated February 19, 1976

DONNA HALL, CITY CLERK

SCENIC HIGHWAYS

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I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Authority - Pursuant to Government Code Section 65302 (h) this scenic highways element has been prepared to fulfill the mandatory requirements for all city general plans to include" a scenic highway element for the development, establishment, and protection of scenic highways."
- B. Intention of Element - This scenic highways element is intended to provide the procedures and policies necessary to preserve and enhance the visual quality of the Highway 198 corridor and fulfill Government Code requirement for such an element to be an integrated part of the General Plan. Highway 198 has been designated by the state legislature as eligible for official state scenic highway status. It is the responsibility of the local agencies, however, to effectuate the means by which the state scenic highways standards will be met.
- C. Scopy of Study - This report will be concerned with that portion of Highway 198 contained within the sphere of influence of the City of Visalia. The study area boundary begins at the intersection of Highway 99 and 198 on the west and extends to Road 156 on the east. The land abutting the highway will be considered as the scenic corridor to a depth of one-fourth mile both to the north and to the south of the existing highway right-of-way. Highway 198 is considered eligible for official state scenic highway status from the intersection of Highway 99 on the west to the entrance to Sequoia National Park on the east.
- D. State Expectations - While the State of California recognizes ultimate responsibility for the scenic highways program since the inception of its concept and subsequent legislation was conducted at state level, it also recognizes that the local agencies must be relied upon to provide the practical protection of the scenic corridor within their jurisdictions. The state has, therefore, developed general standards and concerns to be addressed which are to be made specific at the local level.
- E. State Scenic Highways - In compliance with SB No. 1467, 1963, the advisory committee on a master plan for scenic highways worked to develop requirements for the scenic highway program. Through subsequent legislation a master plan was created establishing the eligibility of certain state highways for "Official State Scenic Highway" designation, and procedures for the workings of the program. It is intended that the State Scenic Highways Program, be part of "the all encompassing, effort which the state must take to protect and enhance California's beauty, amenity, and quality of life." *

Through the program, 793.7 miles of California State Highway have become designated official state scenic highway. ** The program has provided the framework and impetus for local agencies to address the need for the preservation and enhancement of land within their jurisdiction which abuts state highways eligible for official designation.

* State Scenic Highway Law of the Streets and Highway Code

** State Scenic Highway Program Progress Report 1974

II. IMPACTS OF SCENIC HIGHWAY ON CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY AREA

- A. Physical - Located on Highway 198, east of Highway 99, Visalia lies equidistant between the major urban centers of San Francisco and Los Angeles. The portion of Highway 198 indicated as eligible for state scenic highway designation within the sphere of influence of the City of Visalia is the western entrance to the proposed scenic corridor.

Visalia is located in Tulare County which is the seventh largest county in land area in California. The county encompasses diverse topography from arid valley floor to the Sierra Nevada mountains. The valley portion of Tulare County is primarily flat with a slight slope to the southwest. The section of the San Joaquin Valley within which Visalia is located, is endowed with an abundance of rich farm lands which produce a wide variety of fruit and vegetable crops. The scenic quality of the agricultural resources as well as the overriding, importance of maintaining a strong agricultural economy, are dominant factors which will be effected by the scenic highway.

- B. Economic - The preservation of high quality visual environment within Visalia not only effects one's visual impression, it impacts the economic environment as well. Visalia serves as regional commercial and industrial center within Tulare County and has gained and maintained this status through development of a high amenity city scape. If Visalia desires to continue to draw shoppers and tourists, as well as new industries, a plan for preservation of the scenic highway is vital.

It is difficult to determine the actual revenues derived from Visalia's scenic resources. There are approximately 700,000 people who actually travel to Sequoia National Park, via Highway 198 and it can be assumed that the majority of the tourists pass through Visalia. The scenic qualities of Highway 198 do contribute to Visalia's economy, either directly through highway service or indirectly through attraction of regional commercial and industrial interests.

- C. Cultural - Protection of Highway 198 scenic resources is important since they convey to the visitor an impression of scenic rural beauty. The initial impression is projected to the rest of the community and the visitor forms an opinion about the entire community based upon this critical first impression.

Residents of Visalia also benefit from the preservation and beautification of a heavily traveled arterial, for as they regularly use these traffic arteries they reinforce their impression of Visalia as providing a high quality living environment.

III. VISUAL ANALYSIS OF STUDY AREA

The Highway 198 corridor from the Highway 99 interchange to Road 156 is lined with a myriad of various uses. For the purpose of describing the visual impression received by the motorist traveling through the corridor, the area will be discussed in physically distinct sections. The sections are as indicated by the map below:

Section 1 (Highway 99 Intersection) - The western entrance to the corridor has a long range of visibility to both the north and south of the highway. The south is developed in public service facilities. The Visalia Municipal Airport is fully visible. Parking and the terminal building are closest to the highway with the tiedown area for private planes and runway along the side and back. Plaza Park and Golf Course, directly east of the airport complex, combines open space of the golfing green with the mature valley oaks, native to this portion of the San Joaquin Valley floor. The north side of Highway 198, from the Highway 99 Interchange to Road 84, has the combined uses of agriculture, industry, scattered residences and commercial services. The agriculture area consists of field crops where cultivated. The developed portion includes industries of a moderate to low landscape treatment and general appearance.

Section 2 (Road 84-Akers) - Agriculture dominates this section of the highway. Walnut orchards obscure the homes and other farm related buildings from vision. This portion of the highway is lined on the north side and in the median with oak trees planted by a citizen's group in the 1920's.

The northeast and southeast corners of Shirk Road are developed in commercial use with Walnut trees almost totally encasing the building on the south side of the highway. The commercial use on the north has a wide frontage exposure without the amenity of a dense camouflage of vegetation.

This section of the highway is well endowed with beautiful orchards, however, a scattering of advertising billboards in among the trees tends to distract the motorist's attention from the natural amenity.

Section 3 (Akers Rd. to Demaree) - Traveling east of the intersection of Akers Rd. and 198, the motorist is exposed to the fringe of Visalia's urbanization. The parcels are small with a combination of land uses within close proximity to one another. There are many residential uses with small frontages and no city improvements (i.e. curb and gutter) which create the impression of disorganization and incongruity of use. The multitude of commercial uses include trailer sales, welding works, pest control, a grocery store, a barber shop and motels. The heaviest concentration of advertising billboards within the corridor lines this portion of the highway.

Section 4 (Demaree to County Center) - The roadside development between Demaree and County Center is truly urban in nature. The entire south side of the highway is developed into a shopping center. The main building has a setback of approximately 400 feet. Parking is fully visible from the highway,

broken only by occasional trees in islands along the parking lanes and low landscaping along the frontage.

A motel complex with a restaurant and bar consumes the major portion of frontage on the north side of the freeway. Offices and vacant land comprise the remaining uses.

Section 5 (County Center - Ben Maddox) - The depressed portion of Highway 198 is maintained by the state for the purpose of landscaping. Off-premise advertising billboards are not permitted by City Ordinance and State Code. Highway 198 is freeway in this section with cross traffic handled by overpasses. The ascending banks and median have full landscape treatment. Several strata of growth; ground cover, bushes, shrubs and trees encase the freeway.

Section 6 (Ben Maddox - McAuliff) - Between Ben Maddox Way and McAuliff Rd. development is almost solid. Uses include farm equipment sales, auto part stores, a motel, welding, electrical and roofing shops, bars, a church residential sub-division and a public school. A portion of the highway is elevated which brings the eastern portion of Visalia into view. The pattern of development is diffused and cluttered. The clusters of businesses are of varying intensity and levels of commercial use which create a visual impression of disorganization.

Section 7 (McAuliff - Road 152) - East of McAuliff, the area is predominately in agriculture. There are both field crops and orchards. Traveling in an easterly direction the foothills are visible. The general impression is one of openness. There are residences and buildings related to agricultural use along the frontage road. Service commercial activity increases near the intersection of 198 and Road 152.

Section 8 (Road 152 - 156) - The eastern entrance to the portion of the scenic corridor within Visalia's sphere of influence is developed in commercial and industrial activity. A lumber yard, concrete pipe company and swap meet arena are some of the uses. The vacant areas are unkept. The area has a general appearance of unplanned development.

Summary - The portion of the proposed scenic highway within Visalia's sphere of influence, is incongruous in appearance. Only sections two and seven provide the motorist with an urbanized vista which represents the scenic qualities of a state endorsed scenic highway. The areas with the greatest problems aesthetically, are those on the outskirts of heavy urbanization. The character of the scenic highway corridor fluctuates between a high amenity landscape and moderate to low aesthetic urban development. The primary thrust of the Visalia Scenic Highway program will be to protect the existing agricultural frontage from unsightly urban development and to upgrade the aesthetic character of existing urban development.

IV. TECHNIQUES FOR CORRIDOR PROTECTION

A. State Scenic Highway Designation Process - The State makes provision for designation of official Statewide scenic highways. The burden of initiating proceedings for such designation and for imposing appropriate land use controls, however, rests with local government. The following steps must be taken:

1. The State Legislature incorporates a given State route into the Master Plan of State Highways Eligible for Official Scenic Highway Designation (hereinafter called the State Master Plan for Scenic Highways) if it is not already so included.

This action is based on recommendation by the State Scenic Highway Advisory Committee and only identifies eligible for designation. It does not confer actual scenic highway status. At the present time, only Highway 198 is included in this Master Plan.

2. The local legislative body (Board of Supervisors or City Council) having jurisdiction over lands adjacent to the eligible route request (by resolution) the District Director of Transportation to prepare a Scenic Highway Report on the subject route consisting of a (1) corridor survey and (2) facility study. The report includes the following:

- Suggested scenic corridor boundaries.
- Scenic elements within the suggested corridor.
- The relationship of the roadway to its surrounding environment.
- Proposed realignments or improvements of the route.
- Potential locations of roadside rests, vista points, and areas for public or commercial information sites.

The Report is prepared in cooperation with the local agency, including input from interested citizen groups and property owners. It presupposes that the local agency has already adopted a Scenic Highways Element of the General Plan.

3. Following completion of the Scenic Highway Report by Caltrans, the local agency prepares its program to protect and enhance the scenic corridor as described in the Scenic Highway Report. This program must provide for the following:

- Regulation of land use which may include density and/or intensity of development;
- Detailed land and site planning;
- Control of outdoor advertising;
- Careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping; and
- Design and appearance of structures

Again, community input should be solicited in this phase of the procedure.

4. Upon adoption of the Program, the local agency makes written request to the District Director of Transportation for official designation of the scenic highway. If the local agency's program is acceptable, the State Director of Transportation, again upon recommendation of the Scenic Highway Advisory Committee, officially designates the route as a scenic highway.

Caltrans then shows the highway in all department publications and maps, and erects appropriate marker signs along the route. (These signs are an orange poppy on a mountain background done in two shades of blue.)

When applied to a proposed State highway, this program can serve as a vehicle for State/local cooperation in the design and alignment of the highway. When it is applied to an existing State highway, however, the benefit is largely to the County. It, in effect, serves as an inducement for local governments to protect scenic qualities adjacent to State highways in exchange for State "accreditation." While the program is thus worthy of serious consideration, it is not absolutely essential in order to provide protected scenic routes in Tulare County.

- B. Methodology - For the purpose of specific analysis, Highway 198 will be studied in three phases. The portion of the highway east of Ben Maddox Way has been studied in the "Highway 198 East" amendment to the General Plan. As the depressed portion is under state regulation for the purpose of landscape control, a specific study of that area will not be made. The highway west of the Highway 99 interchange to County Center Drive will be studied in depth in a Highway 198-West Plan.
- C. 198 - East - The 198-East element adopted by the city council on July 7, 1975, recommended the following land use policies, which were aimed at protecting the visual quality of this study area:
 1. It is recommended that no industrial uses be allowed within the corridor due to the basic incompatibility of such uses with the character which must be provided within the gateway entrance to Visalia. The basic non-compatibility of manufacturing within an area which receives high visibility from tourist travelers cannot be overlooked and provisions must be made to assure that industrial growth does not continue.
 2. It is recommended that the plan provide for commercial development along Main Street with an almost exclusive commercial corridor abutting Highway 198 from Lovers Lane west to Ben Maddox Way.
 3. It is recommended that future commercial uses be allowed in the area from Avenue 152 to Avenue 156 (presently under the jurisdiction of the County of Tulare) not to exceed a depth of 300 feet.

4. It is recommended that no other uses be allowed within those areas designated for commercial development other than those which are allowed within the existing uses under the updated commercial portion of the zoning ordinance.
5. It is recommended that street trees be required as part of any new construction, along major arterials with a maximum separation of 40 feet.

The Highway 198 study initiated the concept of Planned Residential and Planned Commercial Zoning. Once included in the zoning ordinance, the review process for proposed development would assure aesthetic consideration for any development proposed within the corridor.

It was noted in the "198-East Plan," however, that most of the area would be in agricultural use for a period of years. Once the area did begin to urbanize, it was the intent of the plan to encourage planned residential uses in a phased manner.

- D. Submerged Freeway - Highway 198, depressed from County Center Drive to Ben Maddox Way, is under State of California Landscaping maintenance. The ascending banks are engaged in several strata of growth; ground cover, shrubs, and trees. The median is also lined with greenery. The banks of the freeway are protected from outdoor advertising by City of Visalia Ordinance, Section 7926 and State Business and Professional Code Section 5440. The existing laws require that no advertising displays shall be placed or maintained on property adjacent to a section of freeway which has been, or hereafter may be, landscaped, if the advertising display is designed to be viewed primarily by persons traveling on such landscaped section of freeway.

Major arterial streets (Mineral King and Noble Ave) run parallel and adjacent to the freeway. Each has oneway directional traffic flow. The uses fronting onto these major arterials are generally unseen from the freeway since the banks of the depression and the width of the frontage roads above, tend to obscure their view.

- E. 198-West - The west portion of Highway 198 included within the study area from Highway 99 interchange to County Center Dr., is to be studied within a specific masterplan for that area only. An attribute of the western portion of the highway is a section lined and divided by Valley Oak trees. A multitude of varying uses are visible to the traveler along other portions of the highway. Personal services from motels to hair-dresser join retail commercial and residential uses. Much of the land is currently in agriculture, however, thus the potential for preserving the scenic quality is good.

- F. Planned Community Zoning - The concept of Planned Community Zoning was introduced in the 198-east element to be applied within the corridor boundaries. The intent of this zoning is to create a flexible situation which encourages good design.

The primary advantage of having a planned zone is the requirement that all development must undergo an extensive review prior to the granting of planned community permit. The granting of this permit within an area which is zoned for planned community zoning is not permissive as it is within other parts of the city. Obtaining a planned unit development permit is a mandatory requirement, thus careful review by local government will be made to assure that the policies and development standards will be applied to all developments. The planned zones are recommended for implementation within the study area based on an overriding need for review of development.

Two basic zones were indicated in the Highway 198-east element which consisted of planned commercial and residential. It was recommended that the planned community zones allow the uses which are permitted and conditional within the basic zoning categories as follows:

<u>Planned Residential Zone(PRZ)</u>	<u>Planned Commercial Zone(PCZ)</u>
RA	C1
R1	C2
RM2	C4
RM3	C5
C1	PA

The Planned Residential Zone will allow single family residential development, multi-family residential development and neighborhood commercial uses. The Planned Commercial Zone will allow service commercial, highway commercial, retail commercial, neighborhood commercial and professional office uses. All of these uses could be placed within any of the areas which were designated for future commercial use as long as it was permitted through the granting of a planned commercial use permit by Planning Commission.

For the property owner the implementation of planned zones allows greater flexibility for development. It encourages a greater variety of design and it benefits the entire community as a whole. The theory of planned unit development has been shown to be successful, primarily because the general theory of strict zoning is too restrictive and retards creative design rather than encouraging it. Planned unit development allows greater flexibility and opportunity for profit by the individual property owner, it generally provides a higher aesthetic environment for those who are living and working within the planned community, and it provides a higher aesthetic quality of development which can be viewed by the entire community which has a positive physical, sociological and economic impact on the community as a whole.

It is recommended that the planned zones be implemented and added as new zoning categories within the zoning ordinance and applied to specific areas through General Plan Amendment upon the consideration and approval of the Planning Commission and the City Council. Such zoning will be an integral part of the effort to protect and enhance the aesthetics of the Highway 198 scenic corridor.

V. POLICIES

The following policies meet the minimum state standards for the protection of scenic corridors as specified within "The Scenic Route - A Guide for the Official Designation of Eligible Scenic Highways." The policies further provide a framework around which protection and enhancement of the scenic corridor can be assured.

1. Adopt this Scenic Highways Element as an element of the Visalia General Plan. This report specifically described that portion of Highway 198 which is located within the Visalia Urban Area Boundary and is eligible for designation as an official state scenic highway.
2. Prepare for adoption of a master plan for the area one-fourth mile north and south of Highway 198 from County Denter Drive to Highway 99. This is to complete planning for the area of highway under local jurisdiction and be used in conjunction with the "Highway 198-East" amendment to the General Plan.
3. Adopt a revised sign ordinance which specifies requirements and limitation of advertisement along scenic highways.
4. Adopt and apply Planned Community Zoning to the land area within the scenic highway corridor.
5. Consider city streets for designation as "scenic city drives" where conditions of aesthetic quality warrant protection.
6. Work with the County of Tulare to encourage property owners adjacent to Highway 198 and located within a designated "Scenic Resource Area" to establish agricultural preserves.
7. In order to maintain the viability of the agricultural land within the scenic corridor, it is recommended that the city encourage Tulare County to zone all agricultural land areas to an AE-20 zoning classification. Such a change would assure that no parcels could be broken down below 20 acres thus maintaining the viability of agriculture.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Negative Declaration

Location: The adoption of a Scenic Highways Element for the City of Visalia is required by Section 65302 of the Government Code.

Project Facts:

1. There is one State Route in Visalia designated as eligible for official designation, as shown in the State Master Plan for Scenic Highways.
2. The State Scenic Highway Advisory Committee, the States primary policy body for setting scenic highway program criteria, has left responsibility for seeking official designation of eligible highways to local government.
3. The proposed Scenic Highway Element provides for meeting the minimum criteria necessary for the Visalia City Council to seek eligibility of portions of Highway 198 in the City of Visalia if (or when) they desire to do so.
4. The portion of the designated state highway discussed in the Element is Highway 198 east of Highway 99 to Road 156.

Plans and Policies

1. The element proposes new policies and changes in the present planning procedure which will require revision of zoning ordinances through the initiation of planned community zoning.

Declaration/No Significant Effect

1. The project does not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment or reduce the diversity in the environment.
2. The project does not displace any people.
3. The project does not affect any natural or man made features unique in this area.
4. The project will preserve the agricultural viability of the area.
5. The project will preserve the scenic resources adjacent to the highway.

VII. APPENDIX

Taken from The Scenic Route - A guide for the official Designation of Eligible Scenic Highways*

- A. The following criteria should be primary in relation to the adoption of a potential system of eligible scenic highways for any jurisdiction in California.

The Scenic Highway Advisory Committee utilized the following standards in its evaluation of those highways shown on the State's Scenic Highway System Master Plan of eligibility.

1. The scenic corridor through which the highway passes should have consistent scenic, historic, or aesthetic value during all seasons.
2. Consideration should be given those highways or routes which are:
 - a. State or jurisdictional entry routes.
 - b. Predominately utilized for recreation or vacation travel.
 - c. Utilized for one-day sightseeing, or study, trips.
 - d. A part of an integrated, or semi-integrated, scenic route system that traverses varied scenic corridors for longer trips, and/or
 - e. Through areas of extraordinary scenic value.
 - f. Typical or demonstrative of varied scenic factors available within the jurisdiction.
3. If possible, all principal landscape and topographical type areas should be represented in the system.
4. Routes of historic significance which connect places of interest should be considered even though the route is of marginal scenic value.

In most cases, these criteria, if applied individually, would include most of the highways in California. Therefore, in order to reduce the total mileage of the scenic route system several of the factors above may be applied to any potential scenic highway under consideration. The reasoning for this reduction of the total mileage eligible for designation is that official designation of a scenic highway should be representative of an accomplishment of special significance.

The factors that have little or no particular significance in the consideration of eligible scenic routes would include:

1. Volume or character of traffic.
2. Type of highway or roadway.

* State of California, Business and Transportation Agency, Department of Public Works

Since the designation of a scenic highway is based on that which can be seen or experienced by the traveler, in relation to the corridor adjacent to the highway, these factors are not pertinent. The highway facility itself is discussed below.

B. Standards for the planning, location, and design of the highway facility.

Adequate standards for the planning, location, and design of the highway facility in order to take advantage of the best scenic values within the corridor should be applied.

Generally, the State Division of Highways' standards for these three functions follow. It is suggested that any jurisdiction contemplating participation in the Scenic Highway Program consider adoption of these or similar standards.

1. The establishment of general alignment and grade to fit the scenic character of the area to be traversed.
 - a. Curvilinear alignments should be stressed.
 - b. The highway profile should be rolled to fit the topography.
2. The reduction to a minimum of all roadway cut and fill scars.
 - a. Elimination of cuts or fills wherever possible. This may be accomplished through the use of tunnels and/or bridges when necessary.
 - b. Flatten or contour all grades and landscape slopes where they cannot be eliminated.
 - c. Acquisition of wider rights of way or scenic easements should be encouraged.
 - (1) Access control is necessary.
 - (2) The elimination of outdoor advertising and unsightly development through zoning should be required.
 - d. The provision of vegetation screens for the purpose of hiding objectionable views.
 - e. Selective clearing of vegetation to open up or provide views of desirable scenic qualities.
 - f. The location of and/or design of structures with an intent to achieve beauty or aesthetic qualities.
 - g. The provision of erosion control standards.
 - h. The provision of roadside parking areas and lookouts wherever scenic vistas are warranted.

C. Procedures for the design of the scenic highway facility following adoption of the route.

Since scenic or aesthetic values are largely a matter of personal opinion, it is assumed that the decision as to where to place the roadway to obtain the most outstanding scenery would require participation of other disciplines than the highway engineer. It is anticipated that local governmental representatives would assist in selecting and delineating scenic corridors within which the



highway engineer would locate the roadway.

Coordination between the highway engineer and the above individuals in the field should be encouraged for the purpose of stimulating discussion on the most appropriate alignment. Following discussions in the field of historic and scenic values and later consideration of other factors such as economic and/or potential or real traffic, the most appropriate tentative alignment should become apparent. The tentative alignment should then be illustrated graphically further discussions with the local representatives. This procedure should result in an agreement that would be most satisfactory to all concerned.

In addition to the local advisory group, the highway engineer may obtain advice and counsel from a qualified Division of Highways landscape architect who will assist in laying out the horizontal alignment and grade line. He will examine and identify all existing physical and natural features that should be considered in the highway facility design, and in setting the boundaries of the suggested scenic corridor. His guidance should be given extra weight in instances of differences of opinion within the above group.